

# "PAWNED"

An Unusual Remains of People Whose Very Being is Pledged to Do the Bidding of Others  
By FRANK L. PACKARD  
Author of "The Miracle Man," "From New On," etc.  
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**THIS BEGINS THE STORY**  
Hawkins, an old New York gambler, was able to give his little motherless daughter, Claire, to his old friend, Paul Veniza, a man of means, without any knowledge of her real father until he can redeem his pawned name. Twenty years later, when the white man who stole away on a steamer, and who was the man who pawned his name, was seen by one of the old acquaintances, who followed him to a strange contract, where the younger man agrees to pay him the sum of \$100,000. The man who stole away on a steamer, and who was the man who pawned his name, was seen by one of the old acquaintances, who followed him to a strange contract, where the younger man agrees to pay him the sum of \$100,000.



Monsieur Henri de Lavergne would be flattered indeed with Mr. Bruce's confidence.

What would they say—the white-haired Negro butler, and the ex-quisite Monsieur Henri de Lavergne, for instance—when the millionaire plunger, usually so immaculate in evening clothes, presented himself at their door in a suit of business tweed? He shrugged his shoulders. Down at Rattell's that night his appearance was a matter of viewpoint—had been a source of eminent displeasure, and as such had been very effectively disposed of by the man who stole away on a steamer, and who was the man who pawned his name.

He gathered the sheets together, hid them neatly and slipped them into an envelope. He replaced the cap on the fountain pen he had been using, placed the pen in his vest pocket, and how another pocket took out another pen that was apparently identical with the first. With this second pen, in black ink, he addressed the envelope to Monsieur Gilbert Larmon in San Francisco. He sealed the envelope, stamped it, put it in his pocket, returned the second fountain pen to his vest pocket, lighted a cigarette, leaned back in his chair, and frowned at the ascending spirals of smoke from the cigarette's tip.

He flicked the ash irritably from his cigarette. He had seen back here in the hotel now for two days and the feeling had been constantly growing upon him. Why? He did not know except that the cause seemed to insist on associating itself with his recent illness, his life in the one-time pawnshop of Paul Veniza. But, logically, that did not hold water. Why should it? He had met a pawnbroker who roamed the streets at night in a fantastic motorcar, driven by a drunkard; and he had fallen in love with a girl who was glad she was going to marry a dope-smoking criminal. Why, it was a spectacle to mar!

John Bruce's fist crashed suddenly down on the desk beside him, and he rose from his chair and stood there staring unseeing before him. That was not fair! What was happening now was the recurrence of the bitterness that had possessed him two nights ago when he had returned from Paul Veniza's to the hotel here. Nor was it any more true than it was fair! What of the days and nights of nursing, of care, of the ungrudging and kindly hospitality they had given to an utter stranger? Yes, he knew that. Only—only she had said she was glad!

John Bruce buried the butt of his cigarette in the direction of the door, and clenched his fist. Craig! He asked nothing better than to meet Craig again. He would not so weak the next time! And would he longer the better!

Monsieur Henri de Lavergne breathlessly. "And which also accounts," said John Bruce pleasantly, "for the apology I must offer you for my appearance this evening in these clothes. The mob in that respect was quite successful." "But that you are back!" Monsieur de Lavergne's hands were raised in protest. "That is alone what matters. Monsieur Bruce knows that in any attire it is the same here for monsieur de Lavergne as it is at home."

John Bruce mounted the stairs, and began a stroll through the roulette and card rooms. The croupiers and dealers nodded to him genially; those of the "guests" whom he knew did likewise. He was treated with marked courtesy and consideration by every attendant in the establishment. Everything was exactly as it had been on his previous visits. There were the soft mellow lights; the siren purr of the roulette wheel, the musical click of the ball as it spun around on its little fateful orbit; the low, quiet voices of the croupiers and dealers; the well-dressed players grouped around the tables, the hilarious and the grim, the devil-may-care laugh from one, the thin smile from another. It was exactly the same, all exactly the same, even to the table in the supper room, free to all though laden with every wine and delicacy that money could procure; but somehow, even at the end of half an hour, where he was wont to be engrossed till day-light, John Bruce became exceedingly bored.

Perhaps it was because he was simply an onlooker, and not playing himself. He had drawn close to a group around a table with every wine and delicacy that money could procure. No, it wasn't that! He did not want to play. Somehow, rather, he knew a slight sense both of contempt and disgust at the eager clutch and grasp of hands, the hoarse, short laugh of victory, the snarl of defeat, the trembling fingers of the more timorous who staked with Chance and demanded that the god be charitable in its omnipotence and toss them crum!

Well, what was he craving about? It was the life he had chosen. It was his duce. "Not at all!" John Bruce assured him heartily. He smiled at Monsieur de Lavergne. The other knew nothing of Claire's presence in the car that night, and for Claire's sake it was necessary to set the man's mind so completely at rest that the subject would lack further interest. The only way to accomplish that was to appear wholeheartedly frank. John Bruce became egregiously frank. "It was just my own damned curiosity," he said with a wry smile. "I got out of that ingenious contraption at the corner after going around the block, and, well, my curiosity, as I said, got the better of me. I followed the thing, and found out where Mr. Veniza lived. I started on my way back, but I didn't get very far. I got into trouble with a rather tough crowd just around the corner, who didn't like my shirt front. I believe they said, 'The fight ended by my being backed into a wine shop, where I was stabbed, but from which I managed to escape into the lane. I was about all in, and the only chance I could see was a lighted window on the other side of a low fence. I crawled in the window and flopped on the floor. It proved to be Mr. Veniza's house.' 'Pour l'amour de Dieu!' exclaimed

life work. Wasn't he pleased with it? He had certainly liked it well enough in the old days to squander upon it the fair-should fortune his father had left him. He decided he had not gone into that infernal compact with Larmon blindfolded. Perhaps it was because in those days he played when he wanted to; and in those, and hereafter, he would play because he had to. Perhaps it was only that, tonight, there was upon him the feeling, which was natural enough, and which was immensurably human, too, that it was ir-

some to be a slave, to be fettered and shackled and bound to anything, even to what one, with one's freedom his own, was ordinarily out of choice most prone to do and delight in. Well, maybe! But that was not the satisfactory or conclusive either. To be continued tomorrow

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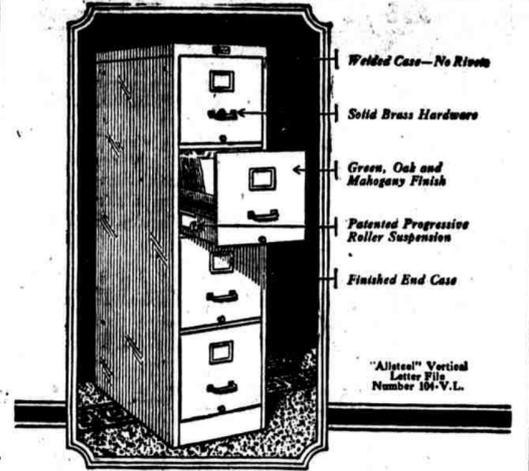
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